

**Testimony for the House Natural Resources, Great Lakes, Land Use
and Environment Committee**

Submitted by:

**Michigan United Conservation Clubs
National Wildlife Federation
Michigan Council of Trout Unlimited**

January 25, 2006

Hon. David Palsrok, Chairperson
Natural Resources, Great Lakes, Land Use, and Environment Committee
Lansing, MI

Rep. Palsrok and Committee Members

On behalf of the members of the Michigan United Conservation Clubs, (MUCC), the National Wildlife Federation, (NWF), and the Michigan Council of Trout Unlimited, (MCTU), I am pleased to express our support for Senate Bills 850, 851, 852, 854, and 857, as passed unanimously by the Michigan Senate.

This package of bills represents an important first step forward in the protection of our world class water dependant natural resources from potential adverse impacts caused by high capacity withdrawals of ground or surface water. While it will be necessary for the state of Michigan to take further steps in the future, these bills provide the vision and means to increase protection for our water resources today. Like every Michigan resident, I suspect all of you are familiar with and justifiably proud of the thousands of inland lakes, tens of thousands of miles of rivers and streams, and the Great Lakes which surround and define us. What many residents are not aware of is that these world class resources exist and thrive alongside withdrawals from many sources of over 1.2 billion gallons of water per day (MGD). And hydro geological experts tell us we can withdraw a lot more than 1.2 mgd, without affecting the biological functionality of our surface water resources. However, these same experts also are quick to point out that a relatively small withdrawal, at a critical time of year or from a critical aquifer can have a significant, if not devastating impact on a localized surface water system.

The goal of our respective organizations in both working on and ultimately supporting this legislation is not to prevent high-capacity withdrawals. If these statutes are ultimately enacted, as a state we may never stop a particular high-capacity withdrawal, (and we may not need to), but we should have the ability to impact the timing, location, or management of high capacity withdrawals to the betterment of our water dependant natural resources.

These bills as a package preserve the private rights of property owners to the reasonable use of groundwater, maintain the rights of riparian property owners, establish reasonable conservation and dispute resolution protocols, and most importantly to MUCC, NWF, and MCTU, establish a standard of protection based on maintaining the biological function of aquatic systems using fish communities as an indicator species, and sets up the process to collect and model data in a scientifically sound way so as to continuously improve the quality of our assessment of impacts on our aquatic systems from future withdrawals. We strongly urge your support of this important package of bills.

Sincerely,

Molly Flanagan, Great Lakes Water Resources Advocate
Great Lakes Program
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Donna Stine, Policy Director
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Rich Bowman, Executive Director
Michigan Council of Trout Unlimited